

Solicitation Number: SCC060001-A1

Statewide Research and Survey Services

Category 3.1.8. Focus Groups

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Strategic Contracting Centers
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Phoenix, Arizona 85007



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Experience and Expertise—3.1.8. Focus Groups

Overview of Experience and Expertise

LeCroy & Milligan Associates, Inc. (LMA) has the breadth of experience and a service philosophy that is well suited to the variety of services requested in the solicitation . For the past 14 years, LeCroy & Milligan Associates has provided research, evaluation, planning and training services for state, federal and local agencies in a variety of project areas.

The combined personnel of our organization provide a unique balance of individuals that have the analytical, statistical, and substantive expertise to respond to the demands of the RFP and produce exceptional consultation and project services. Project teams are formed to include staff members whose unique experience is most needed by a particular project.

Our staff comprise a multi-disciplinary team with professional backgrounds in psychology, social work, public health, juvenile justice, education, public administration, family studies, and management information systems. Our staff's backgrounds include *direct* program development and administrative experience as well as *consultation* in research. This experience enables us to understand the *practical and practice* issues involved in human services. Also, our work is not dependent on one person but rather involves an entire team to provide the service or product. This provides clients with additional assurance that our work will be completed in a timely and efficient manner.

We have a staff of 21 full-time and 2 part-time employees that work efficiently and effectively in designing and carrying out research, planning, and consultation projects. Because we use a team approach in our work, the burden does not fall exclusively on one evaluator to complete work, and thus we can be efficient and timely in our work. Our team includes:

- 1 President/Evaluator, MSSW
- 1 Executive Director/Evaluator, PhD
- 5 Evaluation Associates, Master's Degrees and PhDs
- 3 Evaluation Specialists, BA
- 1 Computer Systems Manager, BS
- 1 Business/Operations Manager
- 3 Data Entry Specialists
- 7 Quality Assurance & Training Team Members, 3 Master's Degrees

LeCroy & Milligan Associates maintains a well-established office in Tucson, Arizona. The offices are connected with a local area computer network with state-of-the-art word processing equipment, and use Microsoft products, SPSS, Epi-Info, ArcView GIS mapping software, and Dreamweaver software. We also have access to large mainframe computers when needed. Our computer and personnel capacity and experience allows us to process and enter large data sets if needed. Our office has a conference room available for meeting and training when needed. We have a large library of evaluation, prevention and training materials. We have two fax machines to receive documentation and we are available by phone, fax, or email.

Our staff have access to numerous on-line and library resources for reference needs. We have DSL Internet connections with virus and security protection updated regularly. We maintain three websites and regularly post reports, written materials, training materials, and relevant links. We have developed a web platform for training modules used nationally. We use Dreamweaver software for creating secure web-based access for online data collection.

Experience and expertise in Focus Groups

LeCroy & Milligan Associates has experience in conducting focus groups in a wide variety of settings. Our company is particularly skilled in conducting and reporting results from focus groups. We have received training from Dr. Krueger, a recognized expert on focus groups (Krueger, R. A. & Casey, M.A. (2000). *Focus Groups: A Practical Guide for Applied Research*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage) and our staff has conducted workshops and training for others on focus groups. We follow the standard methods for conducting focus groups as outlined by Krueger & Casey.

Staff of LeCroy & Milligan Associates have conducted a variety of focus groups with a diversity of participants, including parents, children, youth, agency staff, and other community members. The staff are trained and experienced in the development of focus group protocols, the facilitation of focus group meetings, and the assessment and communication of focus group results. Many of our multi-method projects have included focus groups as part of the evaluation design. We have also conducted a number of focus groups in more rural areas of Arizona. For example, we have worked with the Yavapai County Regional Medical Center to evaluate its First Steps program and used focus groups with the volunteer staff to gain insight into their perceptions of the process and changes in the participants. As part of a multi-year evaluation of a school drug prevention program, we conducted focus groups with middle school youth to complement the findings from a parent survey in the Community Needs Assessment in Three Points, Arizona. In most of our large, multi-method program evaluations we have conducted focus groups (see examples below). Staff of LeCroy & Milligan Associates have worked with a variety of constituents and special populations including Latino/Mexican Americans, monolingual Spanish speakers, Native Americans, African Americans, refugee populations (e.g., Vietnamese), parents (including those with child protective service referrals), health care providers, non-profit agency staff and administration, homeless youth, parents involved with CPS, clients undergoing therapy for substance abuse and mental health treatment, teachers, and others.

In addition we have a great deal of experience in conducting focus groups that are oriented toward gender specific issues. For example, for the past two years we have conducted focus groups on the University of Arizona campus to examine issues concerning the utilization of services from OASIS Center for Sexual Assault and Relationship Violence. The focus group data was analyzed and summarized in a report to the Oasis Center, the University and the Department of Justice, the funder for the project. We also conducted an extensive focus group study for the Pima County Health Department. The Health Department was particularly concerned about the failure of Hispanic women to seek prenatal care. We recruited and

organized a series of focus groups with target groups of Hispanic women (Spanish and non-Spanish speaking groups). This study also included focus groups with health care professionals who were likely to deliver prenatal services to such women. The Health Department invited us back when they were seeking help in reaching larger numbers of homeless youth with birth control services. We organized and conducted several focus groups with homeless youth and interviewed social service professionals for this study (Project CONTACT Focus Group Study: Homeless Young Adult Healthcare Coalition, Pima County Health Department).

Other experience related to designing, recruiting and facilitating focus groups includes a systems “case study” we completed in 2003 of the Arizona Positive Youth Development Initiative for The Family & Youth Services Bureau within the Administration for Children and Families of the U.S. Department of Health & Human Services. In order to examine the extent and impact of positive youth development efforts in the state we identified and interviewed a number of key leaders in the state that are interested in addressing youth issues.

Finally, we have facilitated a number of planning meetings with multiple stakeholders, such as the Juvenile Crime Enforcement Coalition, the CPSA Prevention Community Council funders’ dialogue, the impact council staff of the United Way of Tucson and Southern Arizona and a variety of program steering committees through DES and the Governor’s Office projects. Because of our experience in statewide evaluations, we have gained familiarity with service providers, communities, schools, youth and parents in all Arizona counties.

Several more recent project examples and key personnel are provided below.

Healthy Families Arizona (1991-present). As part of a study to assess the training and supervision needs of Healthy Families home visitors, we conducted focus groups regarding problem situations faced by home visitors. We completed a factor analysis to develop a inventory of training needs. **Key personnel:** Craig LeCroy, Pat Canterbury, Allison Titcomb, Kerry Milligan, Olga Valenzuela.

Nevada Real Choices Needs Assessment of Children with Special Health Care Needs (CSHCN), Nevada Department of Health Services (2004-2005). One of the components in this comprehensive assessment was *focus groups with parents* regarding their perceptions about availability and accessibility of services, most valued resources, barriers to services, and suggestions for improvement in services. Focus groups were conducted in several geographic areas of the state to insure broad representation.

Key Personnel: Pat Canterbury, Allison Titcomb, April Hizny

First Steps Program evaluation, Prevent Child Abuse, Inc. Prescott, Arizona (2004-present). In this program evaluation for the Yavapai County Regional Medical Center to evaluate its First Steps program we used focus groups with the volunteer staff to gain insight into their perceptions of the process and changes in the participants, as one component of the process study. Other surveys and data collection helped to examine outcomes. **Key Personnel:** Allison Titcomb, April Hizny

Protecting You, Protecting Me Program Evaluation, Governor's Office of Substance Abuse Policy. Beginning in 2004, the Parents Commission funded a substance abuse prevention program targeting Native American communities. LeCroy & Milligan Associates has conducted focus groups with peer leaders who will be teaching an alcohol use prevention curriculum with elementary age youth on the Hopi reservation. **Key Personnel:** April Hizny, Jen Kozik

Maternal Health Report: Analysis of Focus Groups Among Women Who Received Inadequate Prenatal Care. (1999) This project was designed for the Pima County Health Department in order to investigate why some women fail to use adequate prenatal care. Our company conducted four focus groups with women and men solicited from existing social service networks in Pima County. The focus groups explored the reasoning behind their prenatal health decision-making. A content analysis of the transcribed tapes from all of the focus groups was conducted. The transcriptions were augmented with the focus group facilitators' notes. The analysis linked common themes of the participants across focus groups. The content analysis was conducted by reading and carefully listing all the possible quotes that fit within some of the pre-determined themes or concepts gleaned from the literature review and interviews that were conducted with prenatal care service providers. In addition, emergent themes were also documented and synthesized with the content. **Key personnel:** Kerry Milligan, Craig LeCroy.

In another Pima County needs assessment project, Project CONTACT Focus Group Study: Homeless Young Adult Healthcare Coalition, Pima County Health Department, (2002) we conducted focus groups as the main source of data collection to gather needs information from homeless youth. **Key personnel:** Craig LeCroy, Kerry Milligan.

OASIS Center for Sexual Assault and Relationship Violence program evaluation (University of Arizona). (2001-2003) During this two-year project we developed focus group protocols and key informant interview guides to assess the needs and perceptions of the Center among "consumers" and community collaborators. **Key personnel:** Allison Titcomb

References

1) Client Organization/Contact person

Nevada Department of Health Services

Debra Wagler, Program Manager, Real Choices Systems Change grant program
Bureau of Family Health Services
3427 Goni Road, Suite 108
Carson City, NV 89706
Phone: 775-684-3479

Project Description

Nevada Needs Assessment of Children with Special Health Care Needs. A statewide needs assessment regarding availability and accessibility of community based services for children and their families.

Project Dates: August 2004-June 2005

2) Client Organization/Contact person

Arizona Department of Economic Security

Rachel Whyte, Program Manager, Healthy Families Arizona

(602) 542-1563

Paula T. Wright, Statewide Coordinator, Family Group Decision Making Program

Phone: (602) 364-1761

Project Descriptions

Healthy Families Arizona Evaluation. A statewide evaluation involves 48 sites, with over 8500 total families to date. This project has included process and outcome studies, credentialing work, and quality assurance and training components.

Project Dates: 1991 to present.

4) Client Organization/Contact person

Prevent Child Abuse, Inc.

Becky Ruffner, Executive Director

(602) 364-1400

Project Description: *First Steps Arizona program evaluation.* In this process and outcome evaluation project, we conducted focus groups with volunteers who provided supportive services to new mothers.

Project Dates: 2003-present

5) Client Organization/Contact person

Arizona Governor's Division for Substance Abuse Policy

Holly Orozco

(602) 542-6004

Project Description/Project Dates: LMA has been involved with numerous projects for the Governor's Division for Substance Abuse Policy. Program evaluation projects include:

- *Protecting You , Protecting Me program evaluation.* Evaluation of a substance abuse prevention program being implemented with the Hopi Reservation.
- *Family Focused Treatment Programs—Program Evaluation.* Process and outcome evaluation of multi-systemetic and functional family therapy services being implementing in the Arizona Department of Corrections Juvenile detention facilities.
- *Juvenile and Family Drug Courts and Diversion program evaluation.*
- *Evaluability Assessment and Evaluation Project for Substance Abuse Prevention Programs for Children:* This project included an assessment of the funded agencies capacity to participate in an evaluation, and the subsequent evaluation of those programs.

Project Dates: 2001-present.

Resumes of key personnel

Resumes of the following key LeCroy & Milligan Associates staff are attached.

Kerry Milligan, MSSW

Craig LeCroy, Ph.D.

Allison Titcomb, Ph.D.

Pat Canterbury, MPH

April Hizny, BA

Jen Kozik, MPH

Hilary Smith, MA

Cindy Jones BA, MIS

Allyson LaBrue, BA

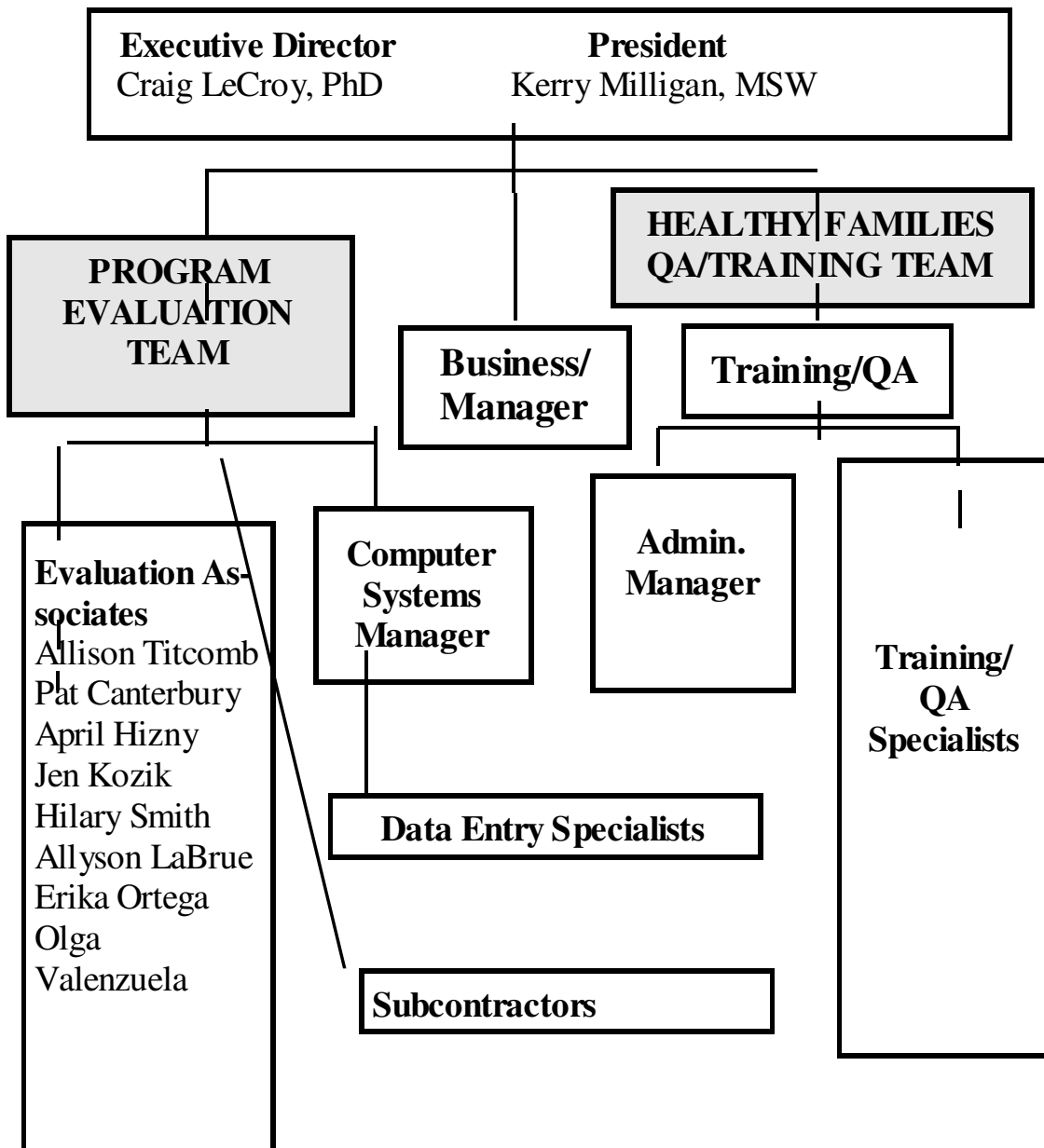
Olga Valenzuela, BA

Potential Subcontractors:

- Judy Krysik, Ph.D.
- Karen Abman, MSW

LeCroy & Milligan Associates, Inc.

ORGANIZATIONAL CHART



Note: The Project team leader is chosen from evaluators for each project, and supervises the project.

Method of Approach—3.1.8. Focus Groups

Focus groups can provide rich qualitative information for program development, strategic planning, research and evaluation. Focus groups allow us to explore information needs and preferences in more detail than can be obtained with a questionnaire, plus they have some advantages over one-on-one interviews. Focus groups are sometimes used in lieu of one-on-one interviews because we can get more information from a group in a shorter period of time and check the reliability of the information at the same time.

A review of literature and key questions informs the development of a focus group protocol. Our focus group protocol consists of developing a set of primary questions to be asked of every participant with a secondary level of questions to insure maximum participation by everyone. We assess and plan for the communication style, language and cultural characteristics of the groups we will be working with. For example, we have translated almost all of our protocols into Spanish and incorporate pre-testing, feedback and revision to insure appropriate language for local populations. If there is any doubt as to the need for Spanish language, we use a bilingual facilitator. If other languages are needed, we might use a program person to translate; for example in conducting a focus group with Vietnamese immigrants in a recent program evaluation, we teamed with the case manager to provide translation. We adapt our style for different age and interest groups, for example, in conducting groups with youth, we might make use of more visual aids and prompts.

We most often use two staff people to conduct a focus group with groups of six to eight people. One of the interviewers is primarily charged with taking notes. A challenging aspect of any type of interviewing is capturing what is said. The best option is to have the interviews recorded and then have the interview reviewed and/or transcribed later.

Training and quality assurance protocols for focus group facilitation

In each new project that involves focus groups, the Evaluation Associate first develops a data collection plan and focus group protocols and reviews them with the evaluation team for feedback. The protocol is then revised and pre-tested before implementing with participants. Evaluators are given constructive feedback on facilitation style as part of this process. Interviewing skills and facilitation skills are a qualification we seek in evaluation associates that we hire. Upon hire, we assess skills in interviewing, and provide mentoring, training or coaching as needed. We also seek feedback from program providers regarding our focus groups. All LeCroy & Milligan Associates evaluation and data collection staff are required to sign a confidentiality agreement and complete a university human subjects certification process to insure the highest quality in our focus group process.

Selecting and implementing appropriate data analysis methods.

Part of the research plan includes a data analysis plan that details the steps and methods for analyzing the data. The selection of these methods depends on the following:

- The needs of the client (primary research questions and type of information needed)
- The type of the data collected (e.g., qualitative vs. quantitative, process or outcome),

Qualitative Data Analysis. If the data collected is primarily qualitative, then content analysis may be used to organize the data around the major questions or themes in the narrative, or text under analysis. In content analysis we develop a scheme to classify information, so that the evaluator can itemize themes, ideas, patterns. Classification schemes can be in the form of checklists, index cards, summaries, or spreadsheets.

We have several staff with experience in qualitative data analysis. The needs of the client drive the type of information that is provided through the qualitative analysis: raw data, description, interpretation, recommendations based on the data or a combination of all these things. The analysis strategies can be transcript-based, tape-based, note-based, or memory-based. Depending on the needs of the client, we provide summaries of groups and/or transcriptions as requested.

Focus Group Study Reports

LeCroy & Milligan's general approach to report writing is to understand and respond to the information needs of the audience for the report. This will determine the scope and format of the report. We have written reports that vary in their technical nature, and sometimes, we produce several reports for one project that address different audiences. For example, we may write a comprehensive report that is considered the main report, and then we may produce a short report or executive report for policy-makers and the public. In other cases, we have written both a technical report which specifically details the analytic results, and a report for lay audiences that only summarizes and interprets the findings.

In general, our reports would include all of the following components:

- A description of the research objectives and methodology used in the study
- A description of the limitations and challenges of the study and research design
- How we constructed the sample and demographic characteristics of the sample
- The data analysis approach and results
- The major findings
- Implications and Recommendations for actions.

Background Information/Work Samples

Examples of reports and projects can be found on our website, www.lecroymilligan.com, for example:

- *Maternal Health Report: Analysis of Focus Groups Among Women Who Received Inadequate Prenatal Care.*
- *Nevada Needs Assessment of Children with Special Health Care Needs—final report*
- *Healthy Families Arizona 2003 and 2004 reports*
- *First Steps Arizona evaluation report*
- *OASIS Center for Sexual Assault and Relationship Violence program evaluation*